

considering the well-being of the Empire. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that these Conferences, guiding as they do the destinies of the British Empire, are equal in importance to any assembly in the world to-day—perhaps one might even say, in history. My sense of diffidence in taking a place at this table and in approaching the vitally important problems that will arise for discussion is intensified by the reflection that I follow in the footsteps of a man who has written his name large in the history of New Zealand and of the Empire. I desire to assure you, Sir, that your reference to the late Prime Minister of New Zealand will be received in the Dominion with the greatest appreciation as a recognition of the regard in which his name was, and still is, held not only in New Zealand, but throughout the British Commonwealth. Mr. Massey is no longer with us, but his high belief in the destinies of the British Empire, his optimism as to its future, and his firm determination to do all that man can do to further its interests, still live and flourish in New Zealand, and it is my mission here, and my privilege, to follow in all its essentials the path already laid down by him. I desire also to join with the Prime Minister in his reference to the late Marquess Curzon, whose life-long period of public and Imperial service is honoured in New Zealand no less than in this country.

Many questions of the greatest importance, and some of grave difficulty, will require our consideration in the near future, and in a very real sense the well-being of the British Commonwealth of Nations will depend upon the result of our deliberations. The solution of these questions will demand the highest qualities of good will, of mutual toleration, and of statesmanship.

I am aware of the results achieved in the past by one typically British method of solving difficulties by the careful avoidance of a decision, and I hope much from it in the future, but in the case of our inter-Imperial relations I think that some definite step is possible, and at this stage perhaps essential.

We who are here at present hold in our hands a weighty trust, not only on behalf of our own people but in a very real sense on behalf of the world itself, and it is a great pleasure to me to be able to say that my enunciation of this principle in the New Zealand Parliament just prior to my departure evoked no dissentient opinion from any political quarter. The small country that I have the honour to represent cannot perhaps exert any decisive influence in this Conference, but, if I may say so, it hopes that its earnestness, its good will, its ready recognition of the varying points of view of its sister nations, and its willingness to fall in with any plans that will make for the common good of all, will to some extent compensate for its want of magnitude.

Value of Imperial Conference.

I desire to affirm here my sense of the extreme desirability—I might even say the paramount necessity—of these meetings of representatives from all parts of the Empire. Situated as we are in many cases thousands of miles apart it is inevitable that without such a means of exchanging thoughts and viewpoints our interests would tend to diverge and the Empire to drift apart. It is clear that the more frequently it is possible to meet in Imperial Conference the more readily a mutual understanding will be arrived at between the various partners in the British Commonwealth. At the same time, some of us are obliged to travel literally half-way around the globe to meet here, necessitating an absence from our more immediate responsibilities for a considerable length of time. It is highly desirable therefore that in every way we should strive to make these discussions of real value, and to arrive at definite decisions upon questions of real importance. I recognize, however, that a resolution of this Conference can be of no value unless it represents the true feeling of the individual peoples concerned, so that it may subsequently be translated into effective action, and this seems to me to emphasize the fact that the Conference should aim above all things at agreement.

New Zealand's Desire to help Great Britain.

I think it fitting here to express the sense of sympathy with which men and women of all shades of opinion in New Zealand regard the struggle of the Mother-country to overcome the difficulties that are at present, and for some time past have been, confronting her. Many of her financial troubles are, I think, due to her scrupulous observance of the nicest points of honour and obligation. None can doubt the capacity of Great Britain and her people to triumph ultimately over all obstacles, but it is felt in my country that the appropriate time to repay some of the benefits we have received from her, and to return some portion of the assistance that she has so generously extended to us in the past, is now. We in New Zealand will regard it as a privilege to assist this great country in so far as our small resources will enable us to do so. We feel no sense of reproach for our actions in the past, but we have a very earnest desire to extend our co-operation in the future. The question of the form in which assistance may best be rendered is exceedingly difficult, but I have every hope that earnest consideration will result in the formation of some practicable plan, and I desire in the meantime to give an assurance of most sympathetic examination of any proposal that may be put before us.

I entirely agree with the Prime Minister's remarks on the subject of war graves. The success of our mutual association to keep evergreen the memory of those who gave their lives for an ideal is a most happy and significant indication of what may be achieved in other directions by an extension of the principle of consultation and concerted action. These men died fighting, not for the ideals of New Zealand, of Canada, of Australia, of any particular section of our people, but for the ideals that are the heritage and the pride of each and all of us as units of the British Empire, and I feel that the importance of taking wherever possible the larger Imperial view on our problems cannot be too strongly emphasized.

I do not intend to discuss here in detail the Prime Minister's address—I take it that a more suitable opportunity will arise at a later date—but I desire to express my appreciation of the welcome that has been extended to the Dominion representatives, and especially to those of us who, like myself, are appearing here for the first time, and of the most interesting and valuable remarks to which it has just been our privilege to listen.